



## The Citizens in Policing Community of Practice

# National Survey of Special Constables and Police Support Volunteers

## Initial Findings Report

February 2016



## Introduction

- 1.1 The national survey was commissioned by Chief Constable Dave Jones, the National Police Chiefs' Council's business lead for Citizens in Policing, working with the national Citizens in Policing Community of Practice. The Community of Practice was formed in June 2014 drawing together over 25 key stakeholders, including the College of Policing, Home Office, Association of Special Constabulary Chief Officers, National Police Chief's Council, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, Neighbourhood Watch, and force and volunteering expertise.
- 1.2 The role citizens play in policing continues to be as vital today as it was in the creation of the Peelian principles on which the police service was founded. Embracing and developing 'Citizens in Policing' provides an excellent opportunity to not only create greater capacity and capability, but also to build social capital and public confidence and to ensure that the police service continues to successfully police with consent. Volunteers who work directly in policing form a critical resource for the successful delivery of policing services and for achieving public safety outcomes for local communities.
- 1.3 This large-scale national survey was distributed to those who volunteer in policing across every police force in England and Wales during January 2016. The survey represents the first on this scale undertaken across England and Wales engaging both Special Constables and Police Support Volunteers. As such it is a landmark for the engagement of police volunteers and it presents a major opportunity for leaders across policing to learn from volunteers' perspectives and experiences.
- 1.4 The survey will play an important part in informing the new national strategy for 'Citizens in Policing', which is currently under development and is due to be launched later in 2016. This survey is one of the means by which those who volunteer in policing are being given a 'voice' in how future models for citizen involvement and volunteering are developed.
- 1.5 With almost 3,000 completed responses, the survey is the largest ever undertaken across police volunteering in England and Wales.
- 1.6 This Initial Findings Report provides a summary of the key headline findings from the survey. There is considerable potential for further more detailed analysis across a survey of this depth and scale of response, building on these initial findings.

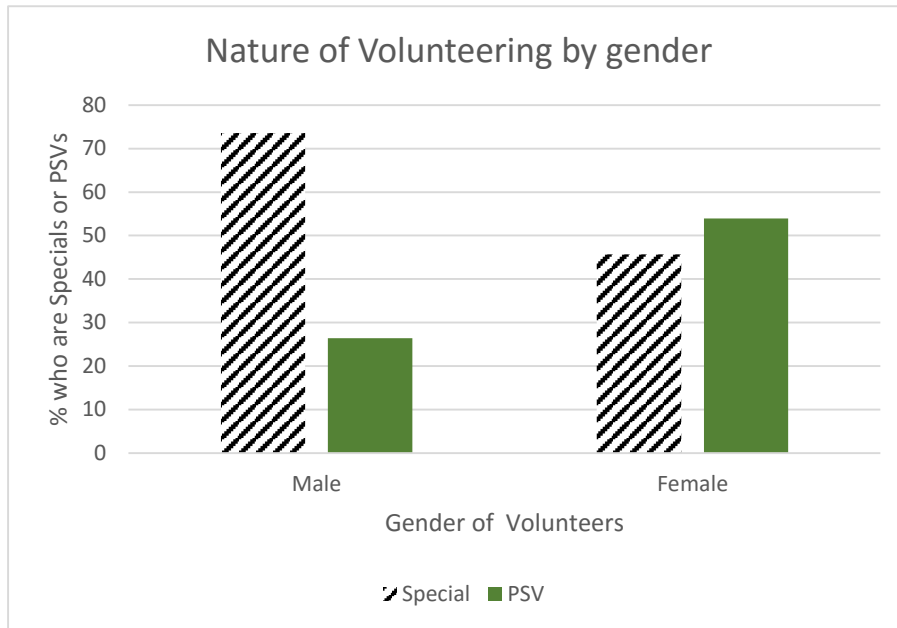
## Key findings

### 2.1 Key findings from the survey include:

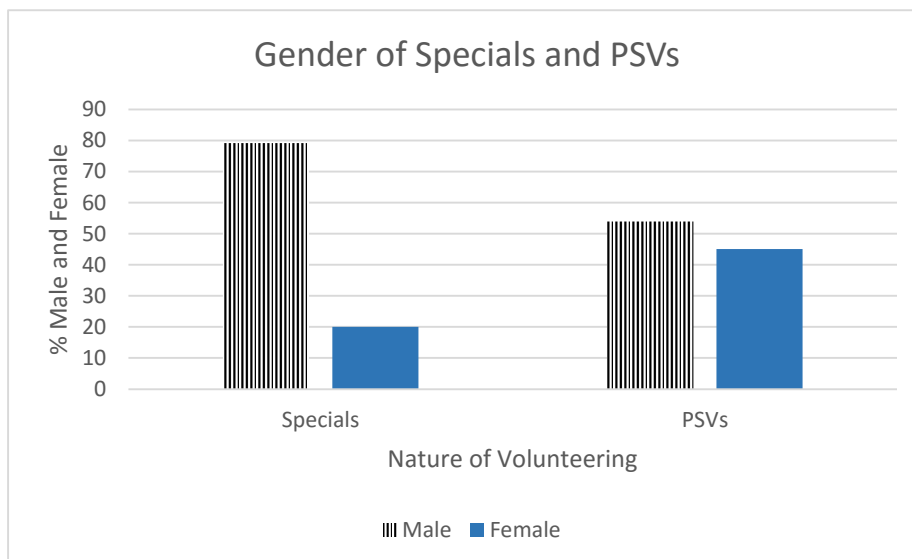
- Overall, a sizeable majority of police volunteers are positive about their experience as a volunteer. Seven out of ten volunteers feel their experience has fulfilled what they hoped for when they joined. Nine out of ten volunteers like and enjoy the work they have been asked to do. There is a lot that is very positive across the findings of this survey;
- Almost two thirds of volunteers feel appreciated and that their efforts are well recognised by the police service. However, the survey also points to remaining cultural challenges, in terms of some Regulars attitudes and understandings, and achievement of integration;
- Whilst a minority, there are a significant volume of PSVs and Specials who are less satisfied, and this group of volunteers' experiences need to be better understood and actively improved;
- Less than half of volunteers believe that the police service is good at managing volunteers. The reasons for this need to be further explored, understood and responded to;
- The top two motivations for volunteering mentioned were giving something back to the community and pursuing a career in the police force. However, the survey results reflect a wide diversity of different motivations for volunteering. Whilst a potential career in policing is a factor for many volunteers, for many more it is not;
- Feedback on recruitment and training was broadly positive, but there are more concerns over the pace of recruitment;
- Less than half of volunteers feel that their force understands the skills and experience they bring, and has given them opportunities to use them. A sizeable proportion of volunteers would like to volunteer in the future in specialist areas of policing. Both PSVs and Specials seek greater opportunities to diversify, professionally develop and specialise in their volunteering activities;
- A majority of volunteers see themselves as "in it for the long-term", but one in six could see themselves leaving in the next year. The lengths of volunteering service already given by the majority of survey respondents reflects that police volunteering is a long-term commitment for very many of them. The survey reflects a wide range of factors potentially connected with retention of volunteers, but fundamentally the quality of volunteering experience appears critical.

## Survey response

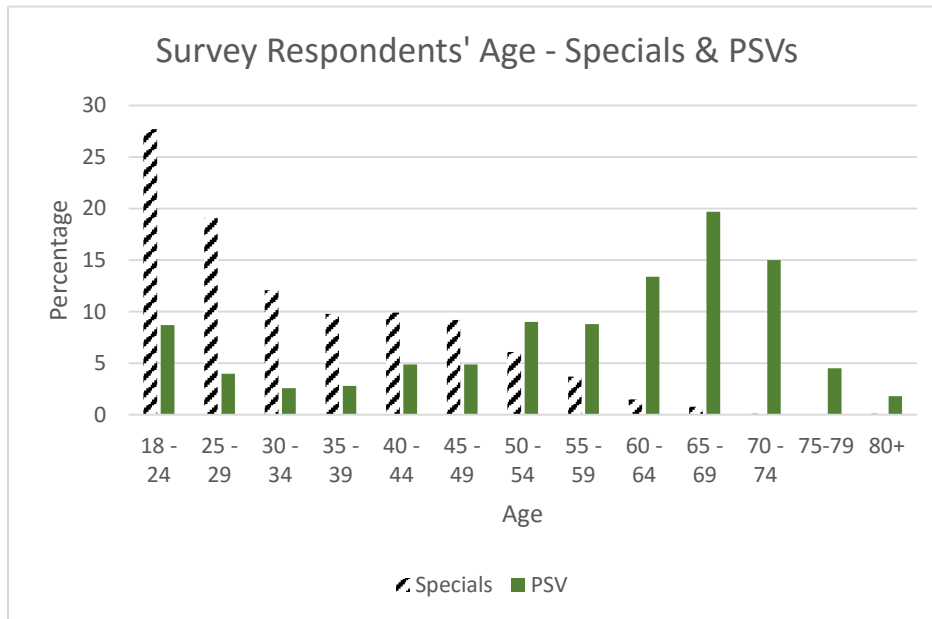
- 3.1 There are 3,084 responses recorded in the survey data set overall, but most questions have a response which is lower than that reflecting a number of uncompleted or duplicate surveys. The effective response, in terms of completion of the bulk of questions, is more in the range of 2,900-2,950 completed surveys.
- 3.2 This volume of response represents the largest national survey undertaken of Special Constables and PSVs in England & Wales.
- 3.3 In terms of response rate, if the total police volunteer population for England & Wales is estimated to be upwards of 25,000, the survey response would sit somewhere in the region of 10%, which represents a solid response for a national survey of this scale. With any survey of this nature, there is always caution that needs to be exercised in assuming those who completed the survey are necessarily 'representative' of the wider body of police volunteers; there may well be elements where there is a more systematic skew or bias in terms of those who have and have not completed.
- 3.4 There were responses to the survey from every force area in England and Wales, albeit the response volumes show a wide variation across forces. Ten or so forces with larger numbers of responses contribute roughly 50% of all those who took part. A similar number of forces have very small volumes of surveys completed (25 or fewer). Models of volunteering and the nature of cohorts of both Special Constables and PSVs in forces vary significantly across different force areas, as most likely do key elements of the volunteering experience, and therefore this unevenness in survey response will likely impact on the overall national picture presented in the survey.
- 3.5 Approximately two thirds of the responses are from Special Constables, and one third from PSVs.
- 3.6 In terms of gender, 70% were male and 30% female. There were 863 female volunteer responses, which is a large sample of female police volunteers, and deserving of more detailed analysis beyond this current headline initial findings report.
- 3.7 54% of female respondents who stated their nature of volunteering were PSVs, and 46% Special Constables. In contrast, almost three quarters of male correspondents were Special Constables.



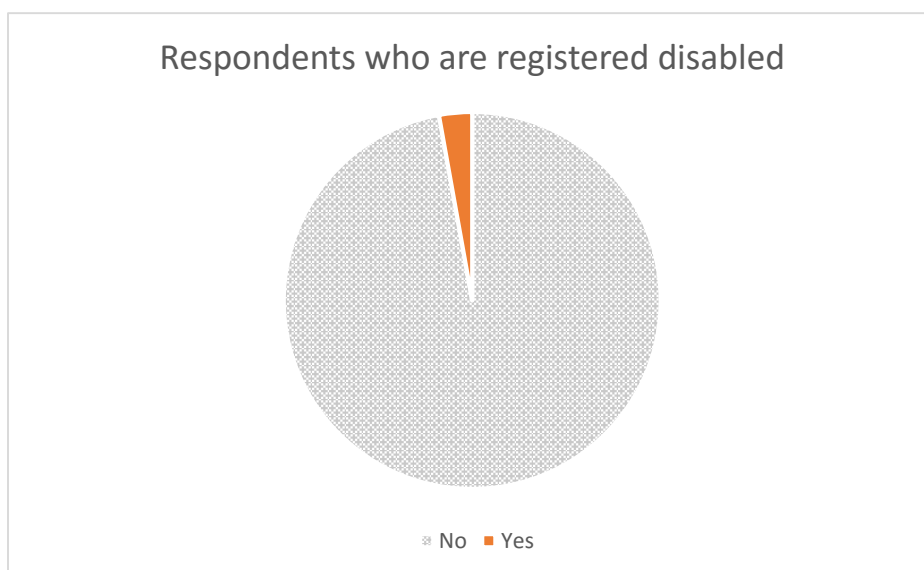
3.8 Reflecting this, when looked at by the gender mix of Specials and of PSVs, for Specials almost four out of five were male, whereas there were only slightly more males than females for PSVs.



3.9 The age distribution of Specials and PSVs who responded to the survey were significantly different. Almost half of the Specials who responded were under thirty, compared with only roughly one in eight PSVs. At the other end of demographics, half of the PSV respondents were sixty or older, whilst there were very few Specials who responded from those age groups.



- 3.10 Only a small proportion (slightly under 3% of those who answered the question) of the respondents identified themselves as registered disabled. This is particularly the case for Specials, where the figure was 1%. For the PSVs the figure is a little higher, at almost 7%.



- 3.11 The predominant ethnicity across the respondents was 'White British', at 89% of the respondents, with the next largest ethnicity being 'other white background' (rounded to 4%). There was a wide spread of respondents across a range of ethnicities, but with low numbers.

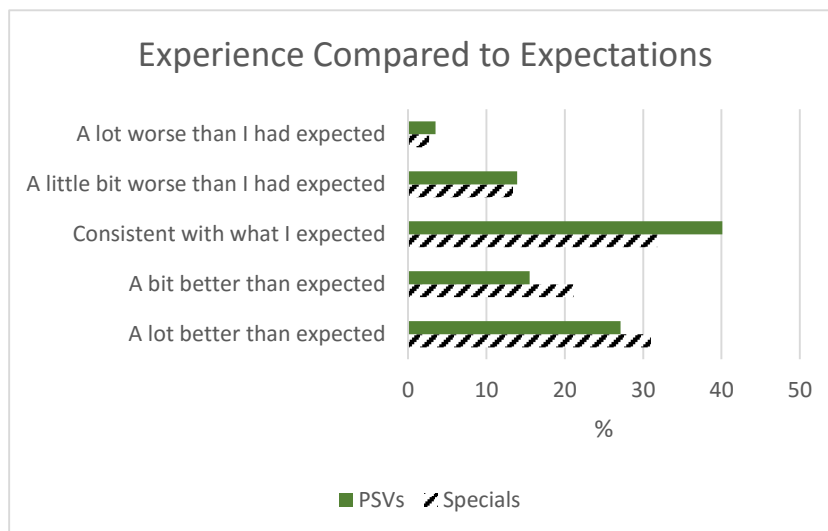
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Number</b>
A1 Asian Indian	1.3%	40
A2 Asian Pakistani	0.7%	22
A3 Asian Bangladeshi	0.2%	7
A9 Any other Asian background	0.3%	10
B1 Black Caribbean	0.4%	13
B2 Black African	0.4%	13
B9 Other Black background	0.1%	4
M1 Mixed White and Black Caribbean	0.5%	14
M2 Mixed White and Black African	0.2%	6
M3 Mixed White and Asian	0.4%	11
M9 Other mixed background	0.3%	9
Not recorded	0.9%	26
O1 Chinese	0.4%	11
O9 Other Ethnic group	0.2%	6
W1 White British	89.0%	2641
W2 White Irish	0.9%	26
W3 Other White background	3.7%	109

- 3.12 It is important to remember that in relation to the above observations, this is the pattern for the survey respondents; a comprehensive 'census' of police volunteers across England and Wales may reflect a different picture. However, this pattern of response does point strongly to some potentially significant differences between cohorts of PSVs and Specials in terms of both age and gender, and to some potentially limited patterns of diversity across police volunteering cohorts.

## The experience of volunteering in policing

### Experience compared to expectations

- 4.1 Overall, a sizeable majority of police volunteers are positive about their experience as a volunteer. When asked whether their volunteer experience had met their expectations, a majority of police volunteers say that it has.
- 4.2 Thinking about their top ranked motivation that they hoped to achieve through police volunteering, seven out of ten volunteers felt their experience has either 'fully' (35%) or 'mostly' (36%) fulfilled what they had hoped for when they joined as a volunteer. That pattern is broadly similar for Specials and PSVs.
- 4.3 Exploring volunteers overall assessment of their experience of police volunteering to date, a majority rate the experience as having been consistent with or better than their expectations. A sizeable 30% rate their experience to date as being 'a lot better than expected', a further 19% see it as 'a bit better than expected' and 35% 'consistent' with expectations. This means that five out of six police volunteers report their experience of volunteering is as good as or better than their expectations when they began volunteering. This positive pattern is largely consistent across both Specials and PSVs.

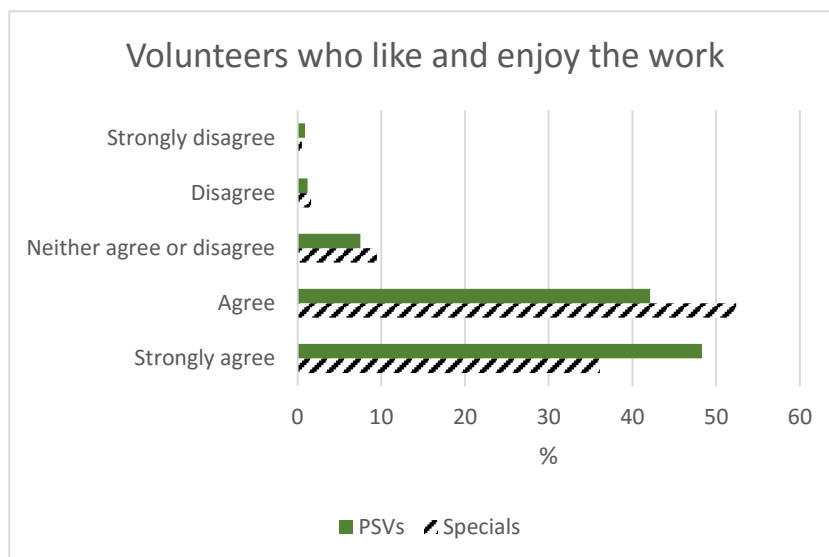


- 4.4 This finding that a majority of volunteers have a positive experience of their police volunteering is further amplified across several other survey questions.



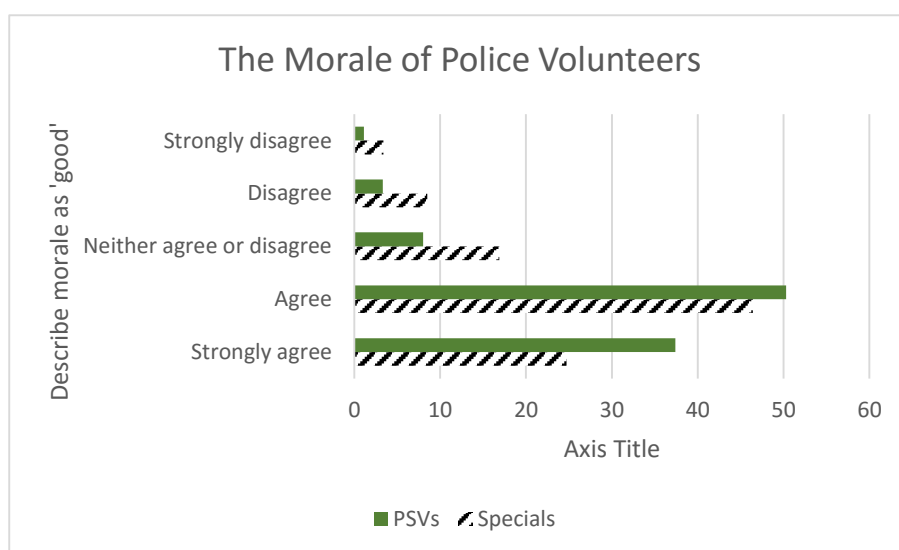
## Do volunteers like and enjoy the work they do?

- 5.1 Nine out of ten volunteers (89%) either 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that they "like and enjoy the work I have been asked to do". This positive pattern is consistent for both Specials and PSVs.

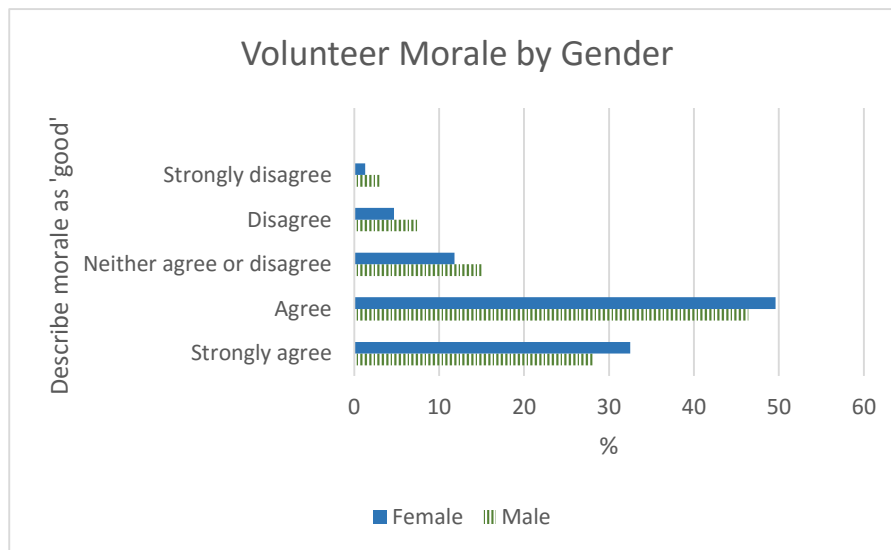


## Morale

- 6.1 Over three quarters (77%) of volunteers 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that their morale is good. This is in contrast to some recent surveys which have suggested morale more broadly in the police service is poor.



6.2 This pattern of positive morale is also consistent across gender.

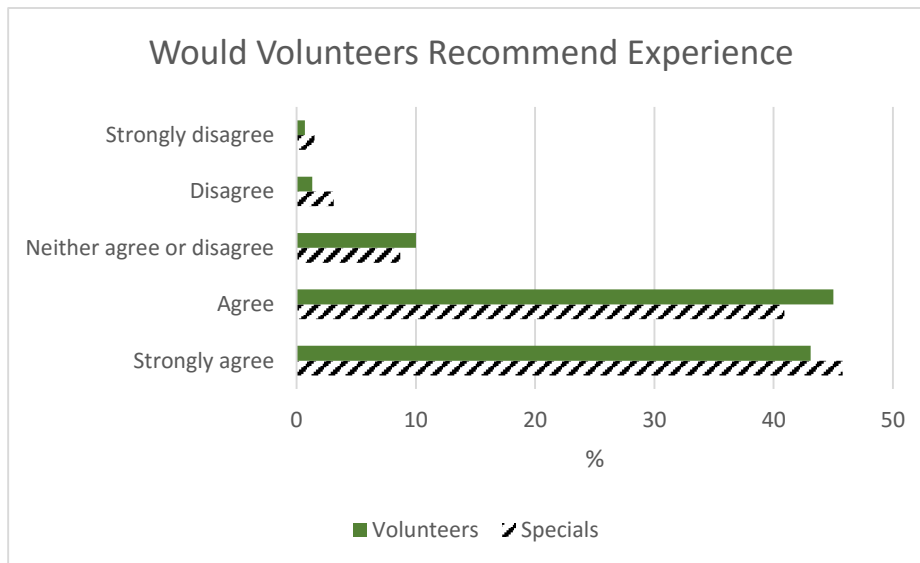


### Making a difference?

- 7.1 A sizeable majority of volunteers are positive about their impact and contribution through volunteering. Three quarters of Specials and 60% of PSVs 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that they have made a difference to the community through their volunteering with the police; in contrast only 4% of Specials and 7% of PSVs do not believe that they have made a difference.
- 7.2 A vast majority of both Specials (90%) and PSVs (89%) feel that they have supported their local force through their volunteering.
- 7.3 A strong proportion of Specials also feel that they have contributed to tackling crime (77%), although PSV perceptions for that are less strong, with only 40% agreeing that they have contributed to tackling crime.

### Would they recommend it?

- 8.1 The vast majority of police volunteers (87%) 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that they would recommend volunteering with the police to other people, whilst only 4% 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' that they would. This finding is consistent across both male and female volunteers, and across both Specials and PSVs.



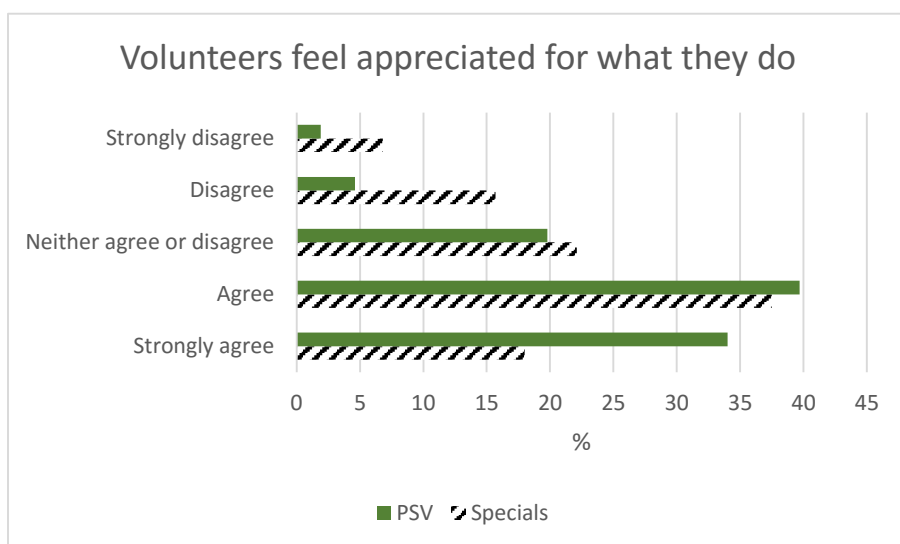
### Those who feel less positive

- 9.1 Sitting alongside this majority of volunteers who report a positive experience, there is a significant minority who have experienced it much less positively. For a quarter (24%) the experience of volunteering has only ‘partly fulfilled’, or left ‘unfulfilled’, their core expectation. One in six police volunteers (16%) assess their experience as having been worse than expected. One in ten volunteers would not describe their morale as good. Whilst statistically this element of less satisfied volunteers is in a minority, thinking on a national scale such percentages would still infer a sizeable population of more dissatisfied volunteers.
- 9.2 The table below shows some aspects of dissatisfaction amongst police volunteers, and reflects that there are interesting patterns in police volunteer dissatisfaction. For most elements of the volunteering experience in which some volunteers are dissatisfied, the levels of dissatisfaction are higher for Specials:

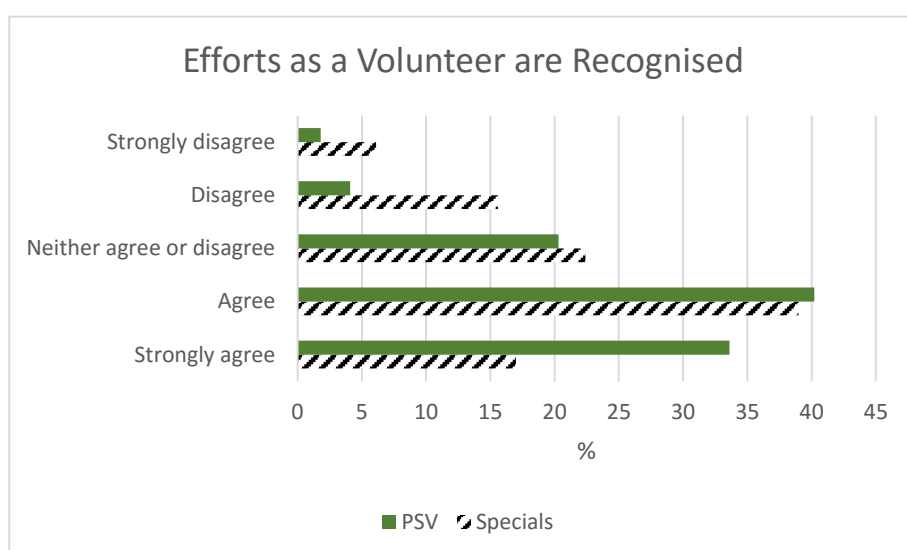
Negative experiences	Specials	PSVs
Disagree that their morale as ‘good’	12%	4%
Only ‘partly fulfilled’ or left ‘unfulfilled’ their core expectation/motivation for volunteering	---	---
Experience worse than expectations	16%	17%
Disagree given opportunity to volunteer in areas interested in	19%	13%
Disagree given opportunities to develop skills	18%	20%
Disagree force understands skills and experience they bring	32%	18%
Dissatisfied with level of supervision and support received	22%	11%
Dissatisfied with level of feedback received	26%	14%
Do not feel appreciated for the work they do	22%	7%
Do not feel recognised for the work they do	22%	6%

## Appreciation and recognition

- 10.1 Almost two thirds of volunteers (62%) 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that they are appreciated by the police service for the work they put in and the impact they make. The overall spread of results for appreciation is more positive for PSVs than it is for Specials. Male and female police volunteers have similar patterns of appreciation.



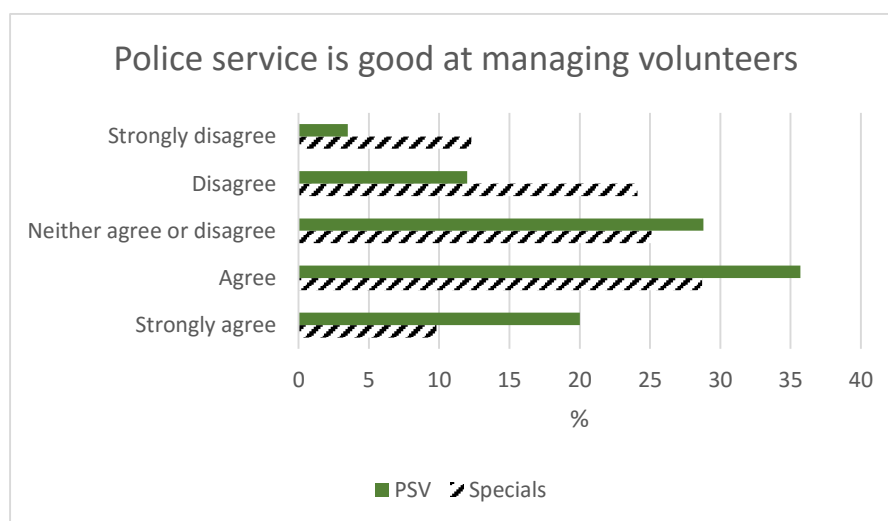
- 10.2 Likewise the same proportion (62%) of volunteers 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that their efforts are well recognised. Similarly, the PSV respondents overall reflect better perceptions of recognition than Specials. Male and female police volunteers have similar patterns of feeling recognised for what they do.



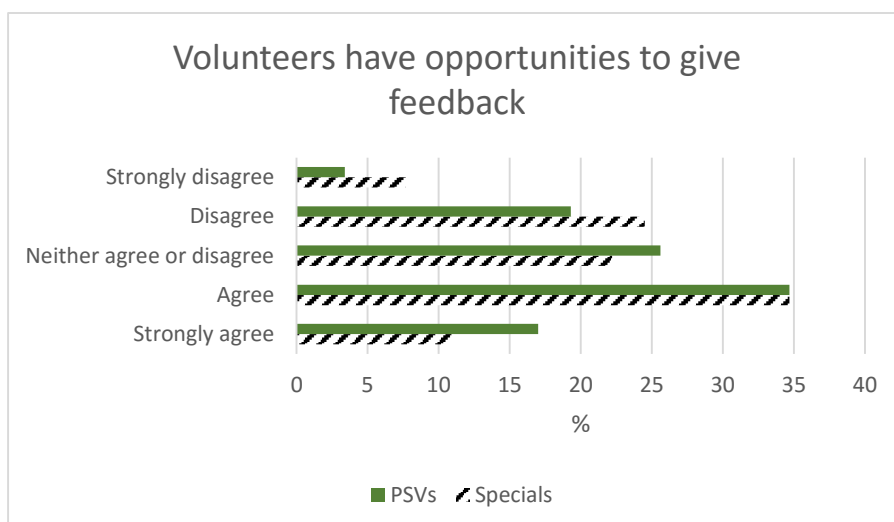
- 10.3 Despite these findings being largely positive, a quite sizeable minority of police volunteers – broadly one in six, and somewhat higher for Specials - ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ that their efforts are well recognised and that their work and impact is appreciated. So whilst many volunteers do feel positive in terms of recognition and appreciation, there is also a sizeable minority of volunteers who do not.

### Volunteer management

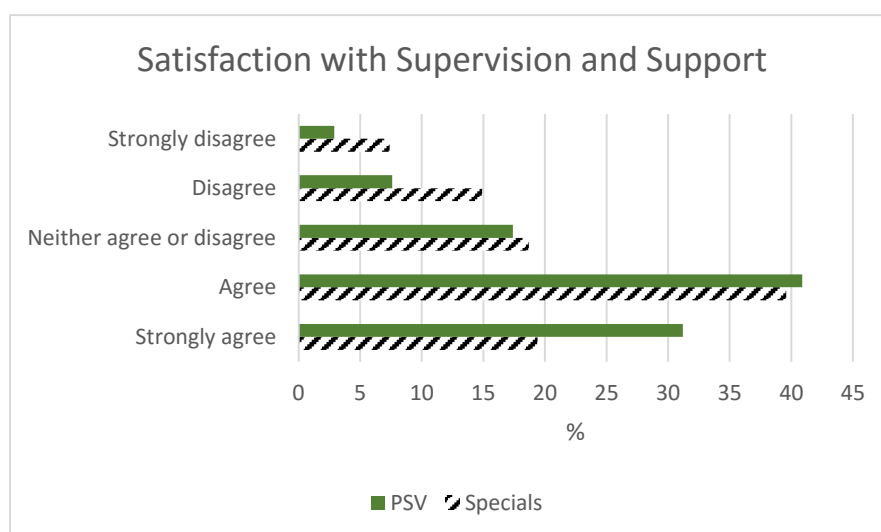
- 11.1 When asked whether “the service is good at managing volunteers”, the spread of results is less positive than across many other questions in the survey; 13% ‘strongly agree’ and 31% ‘agree’, but a sizeable one in five (20%) ‘disagree’ and further one in ten (9%) ‘strongly disagree’. This implies the police service still has work to do to be recognised as an organisation that is good at managing volunteers by many of the volunteers that currently work within it.
- 11.2 The perceptions of Specials of the police services capability to manage volunteers are substantially more negative than the perceptions of PSVs.



- 11.3 Another question area where responses were less positive relates to opportunities for volunteers to provide feedback about their role. Over a quarter of volunteers (29%) ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ that they have opportunities to feedback about their role and experience of volunteering. Once again, Specials are less positive on this element of their volunteering experience than are PSVs.



- 11.4 Most volunteers were satisfied with the supervision and support they receive, but a sizeable minority of almost one in five volunteers (18%) were not. Again, the spread of results is a little less positive for Specials than for PSVs.

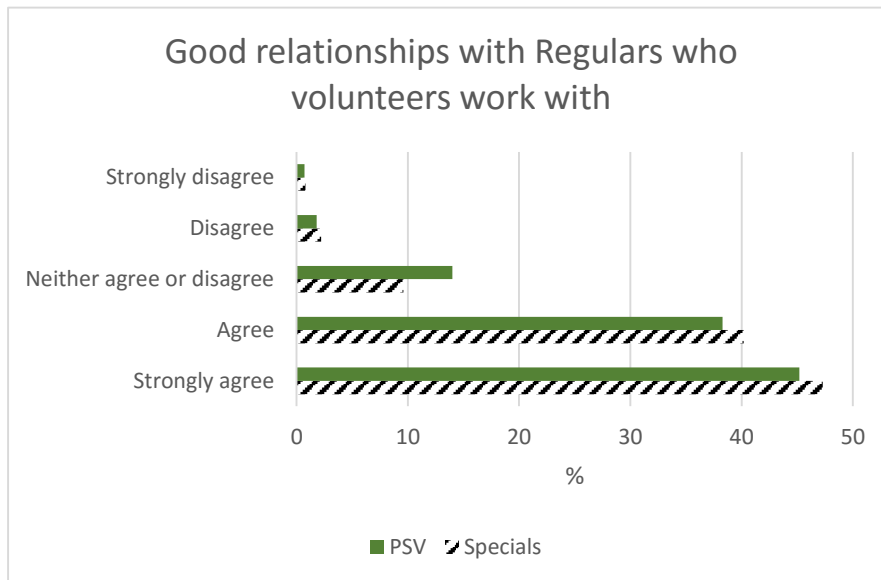


## Powers and Standards

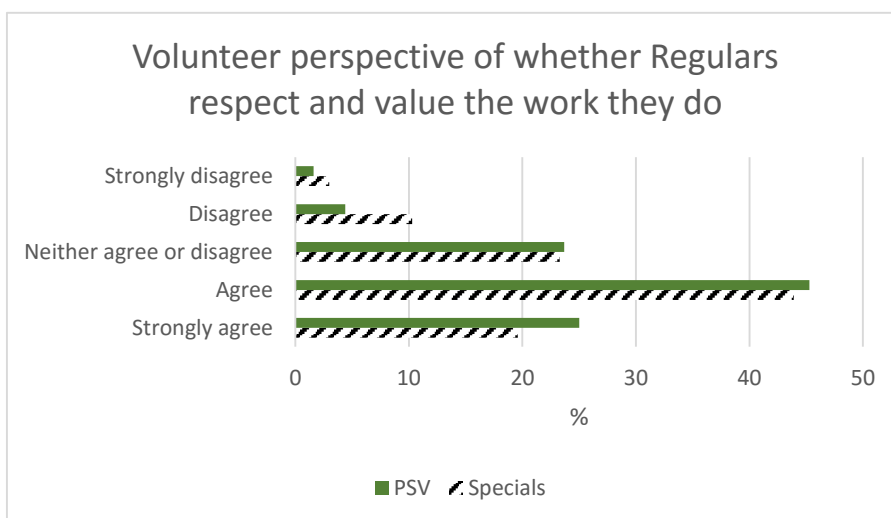
- 12.1 Over two thirds of volunteers (69%) agreed that they would like appropriate additional powers to support their volunteer roles.
- 12.2 The vast majority of volunteers (87%) support national minimum standards for Special Constables and Police Service Volunteers.

## Relationships and Culture

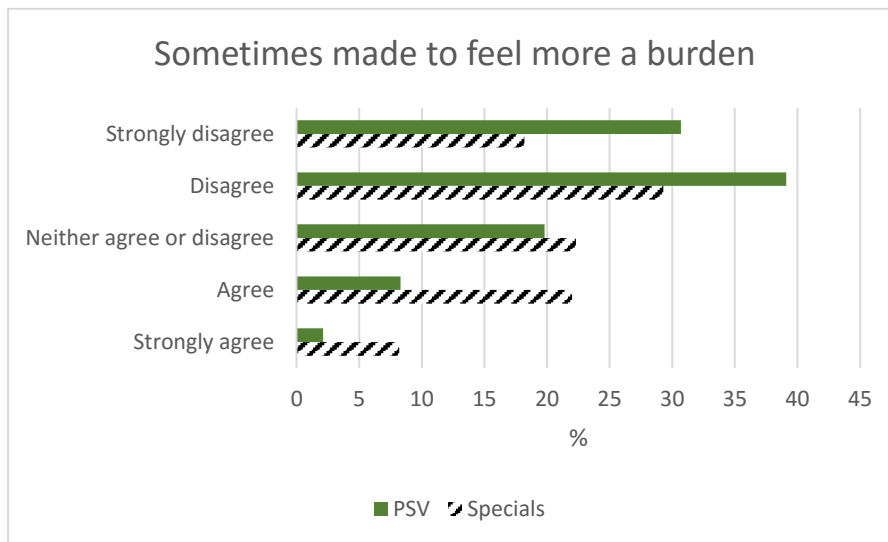
- 13.1 The vast majority of volunteers feel that they have good relationships with the Regular police officers that they personally work with (86% 'agree' or 'strongly agree'; only 3% 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'). The spread of results are very similar for both Specials and PSVs.



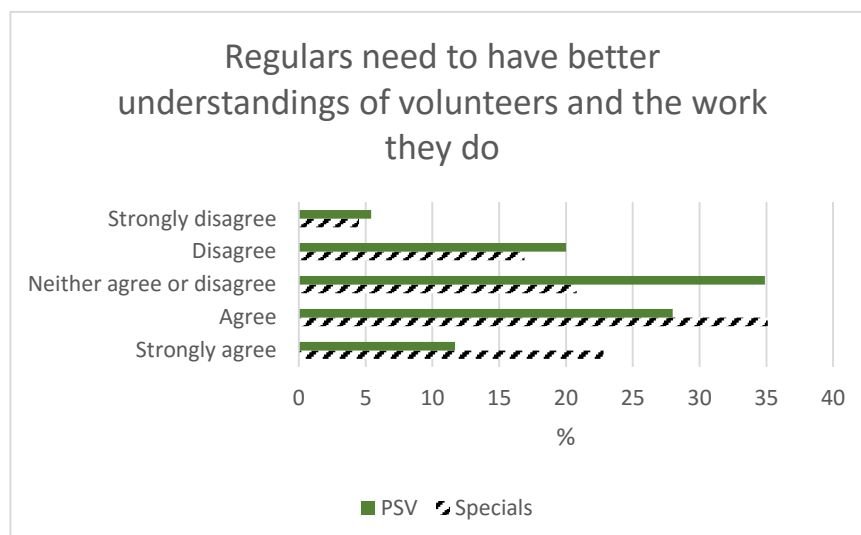
- 13.2 Their perspectives more generally on relationships between Regulars and other Specials and volunteers are slightly less positive (66% 'agree' or strongly agree' relationships more widely are good, whilst a larger 10% 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree').
- 13.3 Two thirds of volunteers (66%) think Regular officers 'respect and value' the work they do as a volunteer, although a sizeable minority of one in nine volunteers (11%) do not feel their work to be valued and respected by Regulars. Specials are more likely than PSVs to feel that Regulars do not respect and value the work that they do.



- 13.4 The vast majority of volunteers (95%) state that they respect and value the work that Regular police officers do.
- 13.5 Most volunteers disagreed that Regular officers sometimes made them feel more a burden than a help, although a quarter (24%) felt that this is how they are sometimes made to feel. This was much more the case for Specials, with only a small number of PSVs feeling that they were sometimes made to feel more of a burden.



- 13.6 Just over half (52%) of volunteers feel that Regular officers “need to have a better understanding of volunteers and the work they do”. This viewpoint is more prevalent amongst Specials than PSVs.





## Motivations and marketing

### Motivations

- 14.1 For both Specials and PSVs, the survey data reflects that there are a wide range of motivations that draw individuals into volunteering with the police.
- 14.2 Of the motivation statements which volunteers were asked to rank, even the one least commonly selected across the volunteers as a whole was still in the personal top three for 7% of police volunteers, which nationally would translate to a sizeable number of volunteers. This means that even the motivations which were selected less frequently across the volunteers as a whole are still significant for a sizeable minority of volunteers. The table below summarises the percentage of Specials and PSVs who had the respective motivations in their 'top three':

Motivations (Appearing in 'top three')	% of Specials selecting in 'top three'	% of PSVs selecting in 'top three'
Give something back and make local community safer	54%	66%
Interested in a career in policing	56%	23%
To do something worthwhile in spare time	43%	57%
To do something exciting in spare time	39%	27%
Interested in policing and wanted to learn more and be involved	43%	25%
Wanted to meet new people	19%	36%
Wanted to make the police more visible	6%	14%
Improve way my local area is policed	5%	14%
Good for future (non-police) employment	6%	7%
A voice/engagement for local community	4%	12%

- 14.3 The top two motivations ranked by volunteers are "I was interested in a career in policing and wanted to learn more about it, and/or to gain skills and experience to strengthen a future application for a paid policing role" (32% of top-ranked motivations) and "I wanted to give something back to my local community and to play an important part in making my local community safer" (26% of top-ranked motivations). Those top two motivations are different for PSVs and Specials – for Specials interest in police career is significantly the most marked 'top rank' choice, whereas giving something back is the highest ranked motivation for PSVs:

Motivations ('top ranked')	% of Specials selecting as 'top ranked'	% of PSVs selecting as 'top ranked'
Give something back and make local community safer	19%	38%
Interested in a career in policing	41%	13%
To do something worthwhile in spare time	8%	15%
To do something exciting in spare time	13%	9%
Interested in policing and wanted to learn more and be involved	9%	4%
Wanted to meet new people	3%	8%
Wanted to make the police more visible	1%	1%
Improve way my local area is policed	1%	2%
Good for future (non-police) employment	1%	2%
A voice/engagement for local community	0%	1%

- 14.4 There is an interesting misfit between the strategic language of many PCCs and forces, which see Specials and PSVs within an agenda across visibility, local policing and community engagement, and the relatively small proportions of both PSVs and Specials (but particularly marked for Specials) seeing elements such as making the police more visible, improving the policing of their local area and community engagement as amongst their key motivators for volunteering.
- 14.5 Whilst the police career-related motivation was the most commonly picked first ranked choice by volunteers, it is important to recognise that 55% of volunteers did *not* rank this motivation in their 'top three'. This suggests that whilst career aspirations of paid employment in policing are a key factor in the decision to volunteer for many volunteers, there is also sitting alongside that a majority of police volunteers for whom this is not a primary motivation. This is the case for both Specials (45% did *not* rank police career aspirations in their 'top three') and also, more strongly, for PSVs (only 23% ranked it in their 'top three', meaning for almost three quarters of PSVs police career aspirations are not seen by them as one of their top motivations).
- 14.6 In a different question within the survey, for those volunteers not already in a paid police role alongside their volunteering, slightly over half (56%) of those volunteers state that they are *not* interested in applying for a paid police role, with 44% of volunteers stating an interest in applying for police roles, and 30% specifically as a police officer. Whereas for Specials the proportions interested in police careers are higher, with 43% interested in a police officer role and 9% in any police roles, for PSVs the proportions were much lower, with only 6% interested specifically in a police officer role and 23% in any police roles.



- 14.7 Of those interested in applying for a paid role, broadly two thirds (68%) say they had already considered a paid role before volunteering whilst the remaining third have become interested in paid roles as a result of volunteering. This is higher for Specials (72%) than for PSVs (57%).
- 14.8 Of those interested in applying for police roles, a large majority feel their current volunteering role will be 'very helpful' (52%) or 'helpful' (27%) in a future application for paid employment.

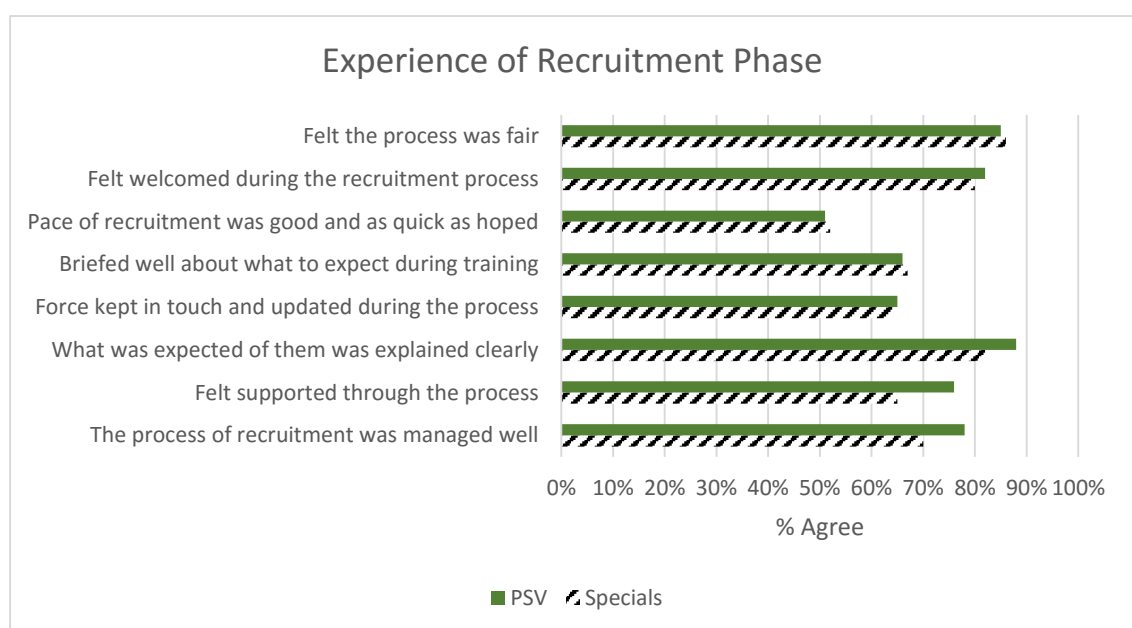
### Wider contexts

- 15.1 Over half of police volunteers are in full-time employment, with a further one in ten in part-time employment. Almost one in five volunteers is retired. A sizeable minority of police volunteers are in education: almost one in ten is a student, with approximately one in thirteen in full-time education. Only a very small proportion of police volunteers (one in fifty) are unemployed.
- 15.2 Approximately one in three police volunteers also undertake other voluntary work outside of policing, whilst the remaining two thirds volunteer exclusively in policing.
- 15.3 The bulk of police volunteers do not have a background of paid employment in policing. However, a small but significant minority do have such experience; roughly 8% as police staff and 4% as a police officer. Currently, 8% are already in police roles; 10% of Specials and 3% of PSVs. This minority but quite sizeable group of police volunteers with current or previous police employment experience is deserving of further attention. There is some limited data from US contexts which suggests the proportion of resigned and retired police officers engaging in police volunteering in the US context may be greater than is signalled here in the survey for England & Wales; this may reflect an area for future policy attention.
- 15.4 For most volunteers, their current volunteering represents their first period of volunteering in policing (only approximately 4% have had a previous experience of volunteering in the same force, and a similar proportion have had previous volunteer experience in a different force). This requires further analysis to be fully interpreted; but one factor may be relatively

low 'return' or 'repeat' rates in police volunteering, which in turn suggests an area for future attention may be on how both volunteer departures and the 'alumni' populations of ex-volunteers are managed.

## Marketing and recruitment

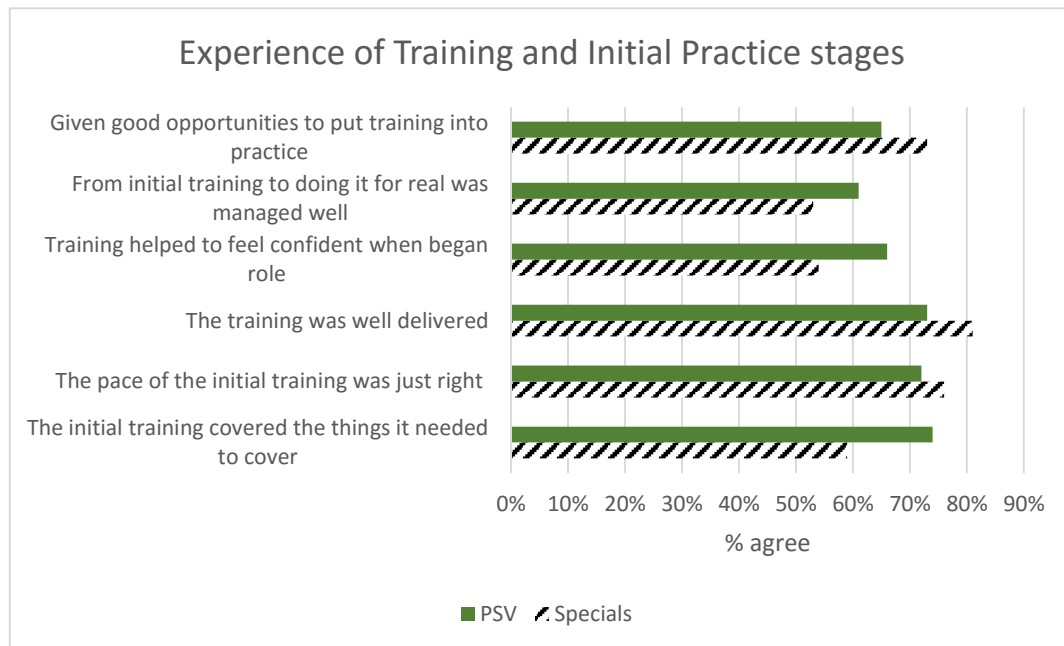
- 16.1 Many police volunteers have learned of the opportunity to volunteer in policing informally 'word of mouth' from other volunteers (roughly one in six), from police officers and staff (one in five) and via family and friends (one in seven). This is an important finding for two reasons. Firstly, because it indicates that such informal mechanisms play a significant role in individuals finding out about the opportunities to volunteer (and therefore the sentiment and perception of police volunteering held by those already involved in policing is going to be important in influencing recruitment). Secondly, this significant role played by informal networks and connections may present a barrier to recruiting from across the full diversity of communities, and of the recruitment of some individuals, who happen to have less existing relationships connected to policing.
- 16.2 Just under a third of volunteers learned of the opportunity to volunteer in policing online, in particular via local force websites. In contrast to the importance of local force websites, the national College of Policing website was identified by a very small number of respondents (only 24 responses across the whole sample), and appears to currently play a minimal role in terms of that stage of individuals learning of the opportunity to volunteer.
- 16.3 Social media is identified by 5% of volunteers; this is an approach that has been used differentially by forces, and it may be that a more local breakdown of data on that mode of learning about volunteering may reflect that.
- 16.4 Overall, many volunteers report positively about their experience of the initial recruitment stages. The patterns of response are mostly similar for PSVs and for Specials.



- 16.5 The pace of recruitment stands out as being perceived as somewhat less positive, for both Specials and for PSVs. Almost a third of volunteers 'disagree' (22%) or 'strongly disagree' (9%) that the pace of their recruitment was good; this would seem an element of recruitment that forces need to focus upon and majorly improve. The element of being 'kept in touch' with during recruitment processes also seems a little less positive than other aspects.

### Initial training and early practice stages

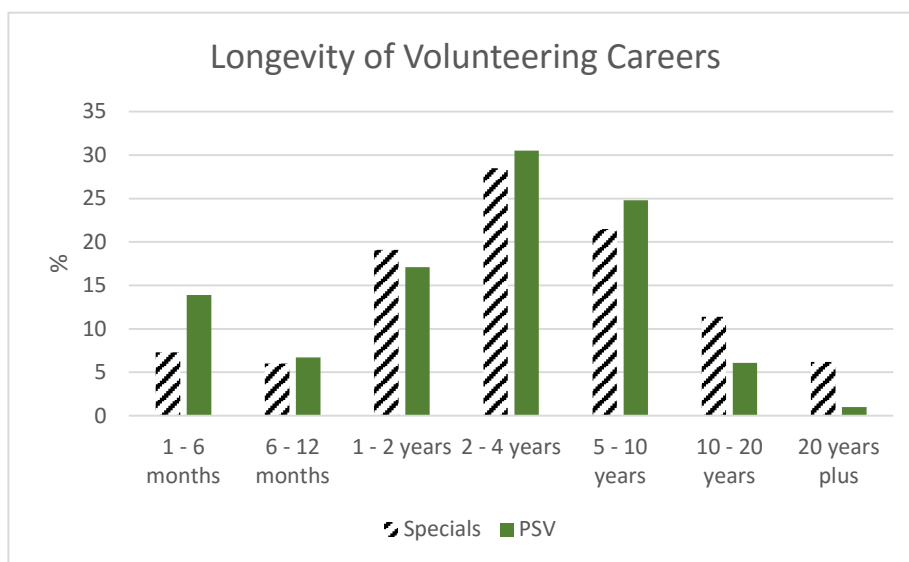
- 17.1 Overall a majority of police volunteers report positively on the training and early practice phases of their volunteer experience. Specials answered *slightly* less positively than PSVs in respect of the coverage of initial training and confidence to practice and transition to initial practice, but broadly the patterns for both are again similar.



- 17.2 The survey results however indicate a sizeable minority of volunteers who view their initial training and practice experience less positively. That roughly one in five police volunteers do not feel that their initial training covered the things it needed to do, nor that they received the initial training they required to be effective when they began their volunteering role, nor that their translation phase from training to practice was managed well for them, is of concern. These are clearly aspects of the volunteer experience that forces will wish to focus upon so that they are experienced more consistently positively by volunteers. The issue of 'confidence to practice' in particular seems a key element for the early phase support and management of police volunteers.

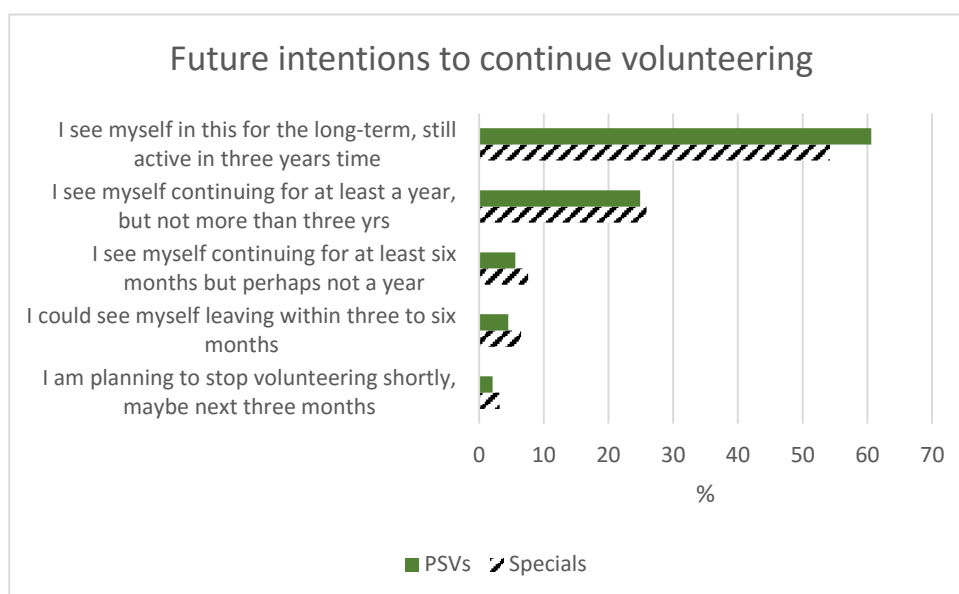
## Longevity of volunteering

- 18.1 In terms of the duration that respondents to the survey had been volunteering with the police, the results reflect this has already been a long-term commitment for many of the volunteers. The predominant volunteer career lengths for both Specials and PSVs are between 2-10 years, which covers over half of both cohorts. There are more PSVs in the respondents than Specials who are within their first six months, and there are more Specials with long volunteering careers beyond 10 years and 20 years of service than there are PSVs.



## Future plans and retention

- 19.1 A majority of volunteers (58%) see themselves in this “for the long-term” and “expect to still be volunteering in three years time”. At the other end of the spectrum, just under one in ten volunteers (9%) could see themselves as potentially leaving in the next six months, and that figure rises to 16% potentially leaving in the next twelve months.



- 19.2 For those volunteers who could see themselves at some point leaving their volunteering role, joining the police in paid employment (60% for Specials and 40% for PSVs) and changes in personal circumstances (65% for both PSVs and Specials) were most marked in 'definite' or 'potential' factors linked to leaving. In contrast 'had never anticipated being a volunteer for a longer period of time' (28% of Specials and 38% of PSVs), and moving to a different area (24% for Specials and 23% for PSVs) are identified by fewer volunteers as 'definite' or 'potential' factors.
- 19.3 There are several factors more associated with the management and experience of being a volunteer which are also identified as associated with potential leaving. These are summarised below. Several of these factors appear potentially more marked for Specials than for PSVs:

Factor related to volunteering experience	% of all volunteers considering leaving who see as 'definite' or 'potential' factor	% of Specials considering leaving who see as 'definite' or 'potential' factor	% of PSVs considering leaving who see as 'definite' or 'potential' factor
Dissatisfaction with how they are managed as a volunteer	41%	46%	29%
Not doing the work they would most like to do as a volunteer	41%	42%	38%
Not doing things that are worthwhile as a volunteer	33%	33%	34%
Not feeling sufficiently appreciated	39%	46%	40%
People being negative about volunteers within the organisation	35%	42%	20%
Not being supported to develop in the role and do new things	42%	46%	33%

- 19.4 One issue identified as a 'definite' or 'possible' factor by 14% of those volunteers who could see themselves leaving was feeling discriminated against. Whilst a comparatively low figure against other factors for leaving roles, this figure nevertheless feels of concern. In terms of the survey sample, it represents 209 responses. Across other survey questions, 82 volunteers 'disagree' that the recruitment process is fair, and 144 responded that they 'disagree' that they are treated fairly as a volunteer. These issues of fairness and discrimination require further investigation.
- 19.5 Respondents were given the opportunity to answer 'free text' any reasons why they might not continue. There was a wide variety of responses, which deserve more detailed analysis, but broad themes from the answers given include:
- Desires to continue. "I'm sixty. If I can pass the physical I'm staying on and on and on";
  - Problems with organisational culture. "I do see myself continuing as a Special for many years to come but I can see why some may leave. Majority of the time we are welcomed with open arms but sometimes we are made to feel like a burden or that someone is babysitting us and it doesn't feel good";
  - A sense of Regulars being too busy to spend time, and of policing being focused on 'firefighting' all the time, and therefore losing confidence in their ability to practice given the complexity and challenge of the volunteering roles, particularly reflected by Specials;
  - Personal circumstances changing;
  - Operational challenges, particularly for Specials - "We are not equipped or trained to the same standard as regular officers yet are expected to deal with exactly the same work profile and incidents and are deployed in the same manner and to the same jobs."

### Getting more involved

- 20.1 Over half of volunteers (55%) 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that they are receiving the ongoing training they need to remain effective in their roles as volunteers. However, a sizeable minority of one in five (21%) 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' that they are receiving sufficient ongoing training.
- 20.2 Similarly, over half of volunteers (58%) 'strongly agree' or 'agree' they have been given opportunities to develop new skills and abilities. Whilst 18% 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' they are being given those opportunities. When asked if their force gives them opportunities to volunteer in areas they are interested in, 61% of volunteers 'strongly agree' or 'agree', whilst 17% 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'.
- 20.3 In terms of utilising volunteers' skills, 44% of volunteers 'strongly agree' or 'agree' that their force understands the skills and experience they bring and has given them opportunities to use them, whilst a quarter of volunteers (27%) 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree'.



- 20.4 Whilst overall these findings are more positive than negative, they also suggest more work needs to be done in respect of ongoing training, development and opportunities for volunteers.
- 20.5 When asked to consider the activities the volunteers currently undertook and whether they would like to engage in other activities in the future, sizeable numbers of volunteers indicated they would 'like to do in the future' many key areas of police activity they do not currently personally engage with as volunteers. The table below represents a long list of areas of policing where the existing pool of police volunteers are mostly not engaged and where sizeable numbers of them would like to become engaged in the future.

Area of policing activity	Specials		PSVs	
	Currently do	Would like to do in the future	Currently do	Would like to do in the future
Special operations units	13%	72%	8%	40%
Intelligence	10%	55%	6%	41%
Roads policing	25%	59%	17%	30%
Public order policing	31%	57%	3%	21%
Working in school with young people	9%	42%	14%	36%
Cyber-crime	25%	40%	2%	31%
Criminal justice, supporting cases through court and supporting victims	5%	36%	3%	22%
Fraud and more specialist crime	1%	35%	3%	27%
Safeguarding children	11%	39%	9%	27%
Managing dangerous offenders	8%	33%	1%	16%
Mental health	19%	31%	4%	21%
Helping to manage calls from the public	5%	20%	15%	30%

- 20.6 In part reflecting and reinforcing the above findings, four out of five volunteers report they would like to learn new skills and to put them into practice as a police volunteer. This is the case for both Specials and PSVs.
- 20.7 Volunteers were asked more specifically about a number of specialist areas of skills and practice, in terms of their current involvement and level of skills, and regarding whether they would like to become more involved in the future. The results reflect a desire from a sizeable number of volunteers to become more involved in these areas.

Specific skill/element of policing	Already use skills in this area of policing	Have skills which don't currently utilise in policing but would like to	Would like to learn new skills and put into practice
Prevention work with children and young people	5%	8%	29%
Prevention work with those vulnerable to cyber-crime	2%	7%	31%
'Networking'	9%	12%	22%
'Penetration testing'	1%	3%	23%
'Digital forensics'	Less than 0.5%	3%	37%
'Malware analysis'	Less than 0.5%	2%	28%

### What would present volunteers propose changing for those who volunteer in the future?

- 21.1 Respondents were asked, thinking about their own experiences, what they would most change to improve the experience for those who volunteer in policing in the future.
- 21.2 There was a wide diversity of answers to this question in the survey. Broadly, three more dominant themes for improvement can be identified:
- 'Support and Development', including ongoing training and professional development, and also practical supervision and support;
  - 'Integration', including respect from regular officers and good attitudes towards PSVs and Specials;
  - 'Choice', reflecting that PSVs and Specials seek greater opportunities to go into a more diverse and specialist range of fields of work within policing, and wish to be listened to in terms of their preferences and the skills and experience they bring.
- 21.3 The theme in the responses around 'support' includes some key concerns about the level of practical and welfare support provided to those who volunteer, particularly in the context of Specials who have been involved in traumatic scenarios.
- 21.4 The theme in respect of 'integration' has a focus on Regular officers' understandings and support; volunteers want to be more accepted by Regulars and to feel that they recognise the value and potential that PSVs and Specials bring.

## Conclusion

- 22.1 The survey represents the first of its scale for both PSVs and Specials across England and Wales; as such, the survey findings are of significance.
- 22.2 This Initial Findings Report presents headline findings from across the survey data. It seeks to identify key themes and considerations drawn from the survey responses.
- 22.3 As outlined at the beginning of this report, the National Survey represents an important landmark in the engagement of those who volunteer in policing, giving them a 'voice' and seeking to learn from them. The findings from the survey will be used to help inform the emerging national strategy for 'Citizens in Policing'.
- 22.4 There is considerable further scope to analyse the data provided by the survey, to identify greater understandings and insight into the experiences and perspectives of those who volunteer in policing. This report should be viewed as a beginning, rather than a completion, of the process of analysing the survey.

**Survey Lead:** Inspector Fiona Willey, North Yorkshire Police

The survey findings were analysed on behalf of the national Citizens in Policing Community of Practice by the **Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice**. A key part of the Institute's work programme is its Centre for Citizens in Policing. The Centre is committed to working strategically with forces nationally and internationally to develop the evidence-base across police volunteering, to translate the evidence-base into real improvements in volunteer experiences and impact, and to support and stimulate the debate about the future for citizen involvement in policing and public safety.

**Report author:**

Dr Iain Britton, Lead Researcher, Citizens in Policing, IPSCJ, [iain.britton@ipscj.org](mailto:iain.britton@ipscj.org)

**Survey analysis:**

Sam Cole, Research Assistant, IPSCJ

Dr Matthew Callender, Senior Researcher, IPSCJ

Supported by Alex Caswell-Jones, Shannon Fawcett and Natalie McCullough

**Institute Director:**

Laura Knight, [laura.knight@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:laura.knight@northampton.ac.uk)



**[www.ipscj.org](http://www.ipscj.org)**